

Greetings, All

As a parent of a freshman currently attending Rockville High School ASTE program, I am in favor of this bill. Up until this school year, I was not familiar with the ASTE program and how important and life changing it can be for a student. What I was familiar with, was my daughter's constant complaint on how she did not like the traditional school environment. I did not start to take my daughters complaint seriously until one day her father and I were notified that my daughter was experiencing mental health difficulties within her school environment and found ourselves in the hospital for an evaluation of her mental health.

As she battled with her mental health, and anxieties in middle school, my 14-year-old daughter came across an informational flier about the ASTE program offered at Rockville High School in Vernon, CT. After researching the program further and with our support, she decided to apply for this program as she was interested in working with large animals. She was accepted, after providing a written essay and sitting through an interview, which I thought was a wonderful experience for to have at her age.

Eight months into the school year, I see a different teenager. My daughter entered her freshman year of high school with several anxieties, uncertainties, and insecurities. Through this program, I see the positive changes in her that I had not seen in a very long time. My daughter comes home with a smile and so much to say about her day. She enjoys the hands-on experience and exposure to natural resources. This program has tremendously helped with her mental wellness, anxieties, and overall confidence. She is an honor student and more importantly a happy student who enjoys her school environment. She came home the other day with a small pot which she had filled with two beans and soil in one of her classes, and a smile. She named her plant "*Bob the bean and the other one*" and is taking very good care of it. She is looking forward to watching it sprout, just like I am watching her sprout into a healthy, smart, funny, loving, confident young adult.

ASTE education is not only important, but also a necessity for many students in need of the hands-on experience and exposure to natural resources that only an ASTE education can offer.

Respectfully;

Omayra Martinez-Baidy, ASTE Parent (Rockville High School)